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**Testimony of
Natasha M. Pierre
Associate Legislative Analyst
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Tuesday, February 21, 2006**

In Support of:

SB 22, AAC Family and Medical Leave for Employees of Municipalities

SB 23, AAC Family and Medical Leave for State Employees

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Rep. Ryan and members of the Committee. My name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Associate Legislative Analyst for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of **SB 23, AAC Family and Medical Leave for State Employees** which would allow state employees to use up to two weeks of accumulated sick leave for family and medical leave purposes, and **SB 22, AAC Family and Medical Leave for Employees of Municipalities**, which would extend these same provisions to municipalities.

As you are aware, the PCSW has long supported paid family and medical leave proposals. We have done so because society and the labor force have changed so that balancing the needs of work and family is now a priority for most workers.

In the majority of American households, there is no "stay-at-home" adult to take care of family needs. Whether there is a single parent or two parents in the home, they

are most often out of the home working. More than 1 in 3 families need at least 2 weeks each year to care for an ill family member; 1 in 4 families need at least 3 weeks each year.¹ The U.S. Department of Labor found that more than three in four employees who needed but did not take leave cited lost wages as the primary reason. Additionally, our population is also aging and more employees are finding themselves to be members of the “sandwich generation.” Such workers need family and medical leave to care not only for children and spouses, but also for elderly relatives.

The Real Cost of Living and Getting Health Care in Connecticut: The Health Economic Sufficiency Standard (HESS), a report that was released last week that measures the economic burden of health care and illness on Connecticut, found that a family illness or temporary disability can cause serious setbacks for working families – even for those who are self-sufficient with employer sponsored insurance. For working-class families living at the margin or in poverty, a family illness can cause hardship or even bankruptcy.

HESS found that Connecticut families incur losses ranging from \$800 to \$6,900 per year due to lost wages during a family illness, and; that CT families incur income losses ranging from over \$300 to more than \$3,500 per year due to lost wages from the wage-earner's own illnesses (depending on work patterns, family composition and type of illness/disability). This does not include associated health costs such as medicine, medical equipment, out of pocket expenses, etc.

PA 03-213 allowed private employees to use accrued sick leave for FMLA purposes. If these bills are passed, it would extend the same provisions to all employees in the state, excluding schools. These proposals will assist families to care for family members and add some protection against loss of income. We thank you for your attention and urge your support of these proposals.

¹ S. Jody Heymann, Harvard School of Public Health study, 1996